

Reaching Out in Region 4

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The End is in Sight!

In this issue:

| | |
|---|---|
| How to Finish the School Year Strong | 1 |
| Blended Learning Resource Roundup | 1 |
| What I Learned from Teachers Who Inspire Me | 2 |
| Resources | 2 |

How to Finish the School Year STRONG

You only have a few more days to [impact your students](#). Don't waste that time. Don't give up yet. These last few days can make all the difference!

How to Finish the School Year Strong

- 1. Don't coast; instead, be more intentional.** Don't allow yourself to go on autopilot. Instead, choose to be intentional about making these last days count. Set one or two end-of-the-year goals and make it a priority to do all you can to influence your students during these last few days.
- 2. Keep first things first.** When you're overwhelmed and there are a million things to do, remember to keep first things first. Focus on what really matters and realize that the rest will get done eventually.
- 3. Draw on relationships you've built.** You've spent a whole year building relationships with your students and their parents, and as a result, you likely have more influence now than you ever did before. Take advantage of every opportunity to speak the truth and impact their lives.
- 4. Strategically prioritize what to teach.** If you've got way more material to cover than you have time to teach, don't just keep plodding along. Instead, sit down and decide what is most important for them to learn. Then focus on that.
- 5. Don't plan to finish teaching too early.** For those of you who are right on track and are about to finish your

curriculum, I have a word of caution for you – don't finish too early. One of my first years I finished my math curriculum a week early, planning review games for the last week. The problem was that once I told the kids we were done with the book, I had trouble keeping them focused and out of trouble for the last few days. Since then, I've decided to have my last test closer to the last day of school.

6. Communicate with parents. Don't just turn in your final grades and walk out the door. Take the time to have one last communication with the parents of kids who have struggled in your class. Give them suggestions of things they can do over the summer to help prepare their student for the next year. Even if you don't think they'll heed your advice, taking a few moments to send them a final email shows them how much you really do care about their student.

7. Try to leave things as organized as possible. Notice I said *try*. I know how much there is to do, but the more organized you can leave things now, the smoother things will go next fall. So take a few moments to jot down notes for yourself of what worked and what didn't. And maybe even to tackle those disastrous desk drawers. (Do I dare even mention the closet?) **Decide to enjoy these last days.** Simple but profound. Instead of counting every moment till you're done, choose to enjoy these last days you have with this group of students. It will soon be over and you'll be relaxing. But this opportunity – your time with these students – will be done. So choose to enjoy these days while you have them and to view them as a gift. This one mental decision will impact everything else you do.

[Teach 4 the Heart](#)



[Blended Learning Resource Roundup](#)

Students who can identify what they are learning significantly outscore those who cannot.

~ Robert Marzano

What I Learned From Teachers Who Inspired Me

In his recent blog David Cutler, a high school history, government, and journalism teacher from Boston shared how he has learned to be the teacher he is today from other teachers who have inspired him:

1. Differentiate Instruction

As a new teacher, I expected that each student learns the same way, mostly by reviewing the same assigned readings and class notes -- and I did a poor job of differentiating instruction to cater to an individual's unique learning style. Two summers ago, all of that changed when I spoke with Rick Wormeli, one of America's first National Board Certified teachers. He told me, "I might teach the way that's uncomfortable for me, but that's fine. My success comes from my students' success." To foster greater success, I now strive to teach my students as individuals, not as a collective, and at times that calls for teaching and treating different students differently. As Wormeli also told me, "Fair isn't always equal," and I want to do what is developmentally appropriate not just for the ages and classes I teach, but also for each unique charge. I don't always succeed, but I strive to embrace differentiated instruction. I also plan to use time this summer to work on improving, and I will keep Wormeli's wisdom closely in mind.

2. Foster a Flexible Learning Environment

Along those lines, I also owe equal gratitude to Mark Barnes, a celebrated teacher and education author, for helping me rethink my classroom management skills -- or lack thereof. Up until a few years ago, I made ill use of classroom time by obsessively checking that students paid attention and made appropriate use of the laptop. I also expected that each student progress at the same pace, with the same resources. This bred lack of interest, mistrust, and animosity, but things improved after I spoke with Barnes. "I've got kids in bean bag chairs, and they're reading books," he told me. "I've got kids at tables, and they're talking to each other, and kids on their cell phones doing something, using a tool, and then kids on computers. It looks like it's crazy, but really it's just kids engaged." My classroom still doesn't look like Barnes', but thanks in large part to him, I allow students agency over how they use classroom time, and what sources they use to master concepts and complete work. Still, I also plan to work on further improving my management.

3. Don't Harshly Penalize Failure

Until speaking with Barnes and Wormeli, I rarely allowed students to retake assessments or submit late work for credit. After

a certain point, this rigid policy proved effective in just one way - helping struggling students sense the futility in trying to recover. Teachers keep students "incompetent" by failing them for not submitting work on time or not completing work successfully, Wormeli told me. He asked, "Is that really the legacy I want to carry forward? Incompetence, but being able to tell all my colleagues in the larger society, 'Oh, I caught him. He couldn't get past me with missing a deadline, let me tell you.' Or is it, 'Hey, you screwed up, child. Let me walk side by side with you and develop the competence and the wisdom that comes from doing something a second and third time around, where you'll get your act together.' Both of those are greater gifts, in the long run, than simply labeling a child for a failed deadline." Following that advice, if a student approaches me within two weeks of receiving a disappointing grade, in most cases he can retake a similar assessment for full or partial credit. After all, the end goal is mastery, and I'm not nearly as concerned about when an individual masters a concept -- just that it is in fact mastered.

4. Encourage Problem Solving and Innovation

I've also drawn inspiration from Simon Hauger, a math teacher who in the 1990s grew interested in doing more to connect students with their passions and creative energies. A few years ago, he co-founded The WorkShop School, a part of the Philadelphia School District, which fully embraces project-based learning to help students learn about and solve real-world problems.



[Edutopia](#) : April 17, 2015

Resources

- [Elementary Reading Plan Due June 30, 2015](#)
- [Medication Storage Guidelines](#)
- [Indiana School Wellness Summits](#)
- [Indiana Afterschool Funding](#)
- [Summer Reading Resources:](#)
- [Read.gov](#)
- [Smekens: Improve Comprehension of Word Problems](#)
- [Library of Congress for Kids and Families](#)
- [K-12 Source of Literature for Classrooms](#)
- [Big Summer Read \(2013\) – Reading Rocks](#)
- [Nurturing the Middle School Math Mind](#)
- [Diverse Summer Reading List for Kids](#)
- [Transforming Learning Environments](#)
- [Summer Reading List – American Library Association](#)
- [Fout Star Schools](#)
- [Summer Booklist for Young Readers \(2012\) - National Endowment for the Humanities](#)
- [East Central Educational Service Center Workshops](#)
- [Toolkit: Read with Children](#)
- [GenOn Service Learning Workshop](#)

Success isn't
just about what you
accomplish in your life,
it's about what you
inspire others
to do.

[IWP: Digital Reading and Writing Workshops](#)